



● Alex Colville, disturbingly composed

Dummy. Through the '50s and '60s works sent to exhibitions were often rejected, but in 1966 he represented Canada at the International Exposition of Art in Venice. It was there that Wolfgang Fischer and his father became interested in Colville's work, "It was so opposite to the pop art of the time that it took people some time to adjust and accept." They acted as his agent in Europe, and were instrumental in his acceptance and growing popularity. In 1970 Colville's exhibition in England was touted as a "turning point in the history of art in the 20th century," by critic Terrence Mullaly.

This first-class documentary, while leaving Colville free to talk most clearly and winningly about his painting and his life, manages to convey very successfully the disturbing, even menacing, feelings brought to the surface by looking at the canvases. The figures and the animals, together or separately, are in spare and bare surroundings; people are often seen from behind looking out and away; the dogs have strange steely expressions in the eyes; beyond the frame there are other things, and questions arise.

His wife says she doesn't know what he is going to paint next: "I saw him

measuring the dog this morning..."

Alex Colville: The Splendour of Order premieres on CBC-TV network, July 7 at 10 p.m. Whether or not one likes Colville's paintings, this documentary is more than worthy of attention and provides an absorbing, accessible and valuable insight into the work of one of Canada's leading artists - some would say our greatest living artist.

Awards (so far): 1984: Canadian Film & Television Association, best documentary over 30 mins.; Yorkton International Short Film & Video Festival, best documentary over 30 mins. and best cinematography; Atlantic Film & Video Festival, best overall film, best documentary over 30 mins., best film editing, best cinematography. 1985: Huston International Film Festival, Gold Award, documentary film (the Arts/culture).

ALEX COLVILLE: THE SPLENDOUR OF ORDER d./cam. Don Hutchison, p. Don Curtis, Judy Stevenson, exec. p. Don Haig sd. Brian Avery ed. Gordon McClellan p.c. Cygnus-Minerva Films & Film Arts **running time**: 57 mins. **col.**, 16mm. Sales & rentals: Kinetic Film Enterprises Ltd., 781 Gerrard St. East, Toronto M4M 1Y5 (416) 4155.

Pat Thompson ●

Steven Stern's

Draw!

The days of the great western frontier represent a time now incomprehensible for most. The period, out of which was born much of America's modern mythology, has itself been mythologized in many art forms, and perhaps most excitingly so on film. With the likes of John Ford and Howard Hawks who created panoramic vistas and characters who reach beyond mere filmic representation to the symbolic, the settlement of America's west on film becomes more than just a part of modern history.

Draw! is not a western film of that sort. It is an adaptation of the genre to suit the modern, more cynical expectations of the mass television audience. Though *Draw!* is not in any way memorable or thought-provoking, it is amusing and entertaining. It is also well done, exuding a degree of professionalism difficult to find in many films of its kind.

The cast of characters includes two big names, Kirk Douglas and James Coburn, in the lead roles as gunfighter-heroes. The remaining characters, although caricatural in some instances, are well-cast and well-played. Alexandra Bastedo as the beautiful blonde heroine, Bess, is strong, statuesque and stunning. Reggie Bell, played by Derek McGrath is the slimmest, whiniest, most obnoxious "bad guy" I have seen on film, next to the Duke in *Dune*. Reggie is accompanied by a series of "caricature-characters", including Wally Blodgitt, the blundering deputy; Mordecai, the shopkeeper who speaks with a middle-European accent; and, of course, the heroes: gunfighter-bankrobber Handsome Harry Holland, and the gunfighter-lawman, Sheriff Sam Starrett. As each character steps forward and the action unfolds, it becomes apparent that *Draw!* is playing with us, as it is playing with the epic western form.

It takes each one of the conventions of the traditional western and twists it,

creating the sense of fun that permeates the film. To begin with, the "heroes", Harry Holland (Kirk Douglas) and Sam Starrett (James Coburn) are not young, athletic types. In fact, they're old. Holland is seeking an unobtrusive retirement in Mexico with his daughter and grandchildren; Starrett has already retreated to a cantina there, with a bottle or three a day. Their struggle against becoming involved in an actual shoot-out provides the opportunity for some good one-liners, as Starrett's drinking provides the visual gags. So much for the "good guys" of *Draw!* As for the "good woman", Bess is an actress from England, travelling the west with a touring Shakespearean company. A thoroughly independent lady, she left her homeland for undisclosed reasons, though one would suspect it may have something to do with an adventurous spirit that also allows her to "enjoy sex more than a man."

Shot at Fort Edmonton Park in Alberta, the landscapes of *Draw!* are not the barren dusty plains we are accustomed to seeing in western films - not that the film contains many long sweeping pans to include the landscape. The camera is kept fairly tight in accord with television standards, but green lushness prevails from the small opening pan across rounded hills (that ends on the wrinkled, gnarled hands of Holland), to the final scene where Starrett, Holland and Bess escape with the loot. Fort Edmonton too, has a well-cared-for look about it not usually associated with the wild frontier town.

Seeing *Draw!* on a large screen, it is evident that it was made for television, which is where most films today end up anyway, whether they were planned for it or not. And, although *Draw!* is not the kind of western that will leave you with a deep sense of the difficulties of American pioneers, or take your breath away with its far-sweeping vistas, the film is fun. Its Disney-like ending caps the film perfectly, adding the final touch to a humorous, un-serious adaptation of a western. If television is basically the medium for light entertainment, *Draw!* answers that demand wonderfully.

Jan Teag ●



● *Draw!*'s James Coburn and Kirk Douglas: just a couple of gunslingers looking to retire